

Rhetorical Analysis (10%)

So far this semester, we have talked a lot about genre and rhetoric. We reviewed the rhetorical triangle and what it means to persuade an audience or reader. Now, you will dive a little bit deeper into these topics and analyze two sources based on what you have learned about rhetorical devices and the rhetorical situation. Not only will this assignment help you hone your analytical and close reading skills, but it will also help you think about the importance of considering context and audience in your own writing. One of the first major steps in building on your skills as a writer is becoming conscious and aware of how arguments are made and what makes them persuasive. You can practice those skills here.

For this 4-5 page assignment, you will compare and contrast a song and a news article on a similar topic in which you are interested. You will be writing in two steps, outlined below:

1. Write a 2-3 page analysis of a song you personally enjoy.
2. Put that song in conversation with a news article on a similar topic.

Start with a song of your choosing. As we saw in the TedEd Talk, [“What Aristotle and Joshua Bell Can Teach Us about Persuasion,”](#) music (as well as writing and speech and some of the genres we more typically associate with persuasion) is also rhetorical. It requires an understanding of audience, the rhetorical appeals, and timeliness (or *kairos*), and it often has a message that it is trying to share. Identify that message, and write 2-3 pages exploring how the song portrays that message. Analyze how well their components work together to persuade or move their audiences. Rather than engaging heavily with the content of the chosen piece, focus on how the artist(s) are making the arguments. **This analysis will serve as your draft for peer review.**

After you have received feedback from your peers and me, start doing a little bit of research. Find a news article or video that is on a similar topic as your song. As you do research, keep in mind that you will be analyzing the article *and* using it to further analyze your song. So, for instance, if you were to analyze Sia’s “The Greatest,” you might look at recent news on LGBTQ+ issues or even an article on the 2016 Orlando shooting to which the song refers. If you were to analyze Allie X’s “Hello,” you might look at culture or society pieces on pop and romance or even current events pertaining to feminism or domestic abuse; you could even look at the closing of bookstores due to Covid-19 since the music video takes place in a bookstore. The connection can be as broad or as narrow as you want, so long as you can analyze the song and article in conversation with one another.

Continue your analysis with the news article, putting it in conversation with your song. Your essay should not be a list. In other words, you are not adding a separate rhetorical analysis to the one you already have. Instead, note similarities and differences in how they communicate a similar message. If Sia’s song uses a lot of pathos to portray the tragedy of the Orlando shooting, do the news articles do the same? Do they instead rely on other devices to persuade their readers? If you chose a news video, how do the two videos use visuals similarly or differently?

Now, if you haven’t already, go back and write an introduction that introduces the two sources (the song and the news article or video), gives the historical/social/cultural/philosophical context for their shared message, and includes a thesis statement.

Important Dates:

- Friday, February 19th: Rhetorical Analysis Draft due in class. Write annotations during class and turn in the annotated draft by the end of the day. In other words, complete your draft for class, but turn it in with annotations by midnight.
- Wednesday, February 24th: Peer Review
- Wednesday, March 10th: Rhetorical Analysis Final Submission with annotations due **by 11:59 pm CST**

General Guidelines:

- Consider your audience. As we have seen, there are a number of potential contexts in which you might use rhetorical analysis outside the classroom. You might be reviewing a song or book or piece of art. You might be responding to a political speech on a news broadcast. You might need to demonstrate the merits, or lack thereof, of a new ad campaign for your supervisor at work. Who is your intended audience for this piece, other than me? How will you demonstrate the devices used and their effectiveness?
- I would recommend you do not write an intro paragraph until after you start working on part two. When analyzing your song, focus on body paragraphs.
- Don't just list rhetorical devices. We all know what ethos, pathos, and logos are at this point. Instead, let those and other tools for rhetorical analysis guide your thinking as you analyze. **How** do the song and article appeal to your emotions or to logic? Don't just say that they do.
- Develop a strong thesis that puts the two sources into conversation. How do they manage to persuade their audience(s) in similar and different ways?

Grading:

You will be graded on:

- Time and effort spent with a pen in hand or at your keyboard writing, revising, and polishing
- Attention to genre and audience
- Attention to the conversation, the comparisons and contrasts, between the two sources
- Participation in the entire writing process, from brainstorming and early drafts to a final polished submission with responses to all peer and instructor comments

You will **not** be graded on:

- Any preconceived notions of the rhetorical analysis genre. As we have done throughout the semester in the Reflection Memos for the Short Writing Prompts, consider the genre conventions that you and your reader might expect, and then consider how you might choose to follow or break those conventions, depending on what you want to say and how.
- Perfect grammar and spelling. While I **do** expect you to proofread, we are all still learning, and you may still make some mistakes. Do your best and ask questions.